

Claxton, P

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Commissioner of Education, U. S. Bureau of Education

April 1916
(51)

President's Office.



April 3rd, 1916

Dr. P. P. Claxton,

Commissioner of Education, United States Bureau of Education,
Department of Interior, Washington, D.C.

My dear Dr. Claxton:

My attention has just been called to a statement with regard to the University of Toronto which occurs on page 646 of Volume I of the Report of the Commissioner of Education for the year ended June 30th, 1915. It refers to the attitude of the University of Toronto with regard to the present war. I regret very much to find a statement which is at once false and mischievous, though ^{possibly} the ^{writer} correspondent had no prejudice against the University.

Instead of the University of Toronto having maintained an impartial attitude with respect to the struggle, it from the very beginning took a decided and very strong attitude as to the justice of our cause and as to our duty. At the opening of the session I addressed the students in Convocation Hall setting before them the immediate causes of the present war and urging them to consider carefully what their duty was in respect to these issues. ^{and to join the Officers Training Corps which would prepare them for subisting on active service when the call should come}

During the month of September, before the University opened, a group of the younger members of the staff undertook drill and were ready ^{at the opening of the session} to become officers of an Officers' Training Corps ~~among the~~ ^{students} which was immediately established. The students enthusiastically joined this corps and it was soon recruited far over strength, 1500 being inspected by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught in January, 1915.

Could this be made more positive?

Under copy
 For the varied activities ^{of the University} in connection with the war I refer you to the copy of my report for the year ended June 30th, 1915, on pages 8, 9, and 10. ^{which I am sending you} Since that time students have been leaving in large numbers and we have now fully 2000 graduates and undergraduates on active service.

It is true that the University did not at the beginning establish a University Battalion, but we did not do so on the urgent advice of the military authorities at Ottawa and Toronto, it being thought that we could do better military service by distributing the majority of our young men as officers in other regiments. ^{through the Reserve} The result has been that we have staffed in ^{greater} ~~more~~ or less degree a large number of regiments, but now we are instituting two distinct overseas companies bearing our own name in addition to all that we have done.

That any slur should be cast on the patriotism of the University of Toronto or its attitude on the present war is most unjust. We have had no change of policy from the beginning to the present, but unquestionably, as in other Universities, the feeling has been growing in volume and depth among the students as ^{the} ~~its~~ meaning has taken hold upon them. ^{the attitude}

^{the writer of the article represents}
 I cannot but think that your informant has been influenced by an unfortunate occurrence with regard to my not being willing to recommend to the Board of Governors that three ~~German~~ ^{of German origin} members of our staff should be summarily dismissed in response to newspaper opinion. The University ⁱⁿ while endeavouring to deal with ^{justly} ~~British fair play in~~ a ~~matter of~~ ^{we} justice towards these men only followed the example of the majority of British Universities that were similarly placed, but to

use such an incident as this for the purpose of casting a slur upon
 our general attitude with regard to the war is, as I said, both false
 and ^{misleading?} pernicious.

I hope that you will be able to have this corrected
 in some way. I have nothing at all to say in criticism of other
 Canadian Universities or in comparison of ^{ours} with ^{any other} theirs. We have
^{I believe} all endeavoured to do our duty in this ^{unfulfilled} regard.

I shall be glad to receive copies of the publications
 of the United States Bureau of Education.

With kind personal regards, I am,

Yours sincerely,

President.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF EDUCATION

WASHINGTON

April 8, 1916.

Dr. Robert A. Falconer,
President, University of Toronto,
Toronto, Ontario,
Canada.

My dear Dr. Falconer:

In the absence of the Commissioner of Education your letter, bearing date April 3, current, has been referred to me on account of my personal responsibility for the statement in the Commissioner's annual Report relative to the University of Toronto.

I beg to assure you that the statement contained in the Report, pp. 646-47, to which you take exception, was intended in a spirit totally different from that which is attributed to it. The facts stated in the Canadian Annual Review for 1914, pp. 264-65, which gave the basis for the statement, were understood to indicate a desire on the part of the University to maintain its character as a center of rational judgments and moral ideals in the midst of personal controversies having no direct bearing upon the national welfare, a position which has its parallel in that of many universities both in America and in Europe. The response of the University of Toronto to the national call is stated briefly but emphatically on p. 647. Since your letter was received the statement has been referred by me to several men of good judgment, all

Dr. Robert A. Falconer -- 3.

In order to secure information on the subject of military drill for use in the Commissioner's Report, the following question has been sent to several institutions:

Is military drill required of students in your university; if not required, is it encouraged among the students; what is your personal opinion as to the value of such training?

A statement of the policy of the University of Toronto in this respect, and of your personal opinion, would be greatly appreciated and could be used in connection with the proposed extracts from your letter.

With assurance of my high esteem, I am,

Yours respectfully,

A. Tolman Smith.

Specialist in Foreign
Educational Systems.

Dr. Robert A. Falconer -- 2.

of whom interpreted it in the sense in which it is here explained. The high opinion entertained in this office of the University of Toronto has been repeatedly expressed and attention publicly called to its history and resources. The account of the University given in the Commissioner's Report for 1910, pp. 346-55, excited at the time an interest which is still reflected in inquiries received at this office, and this fact alone precludes the possibility of any disposition to discount either the animating spirit or scholastic standards of the institution.

At the present time the question of military training in schools and universities is one of special interest in the United States, and for this reason it is intended to present statements on the subject drawn from the experience of foreign countries. In this connection special importance would attach to the experience of Canada because of the similarity between its institutions and those of this country; hence the forthcoming Report will furnish opportunity for using portions of your letter, covering your personal address to the students, as stated by you, and the distinguished service that the University was prepared to render by the supply of young men as officers in various regiments of the Province. It would seem that this would suffice to correct any erroneous impression that may have been made by the statement of which you complain.

April 3rd, 1916

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Commissioner of Education, United States Bureau of Education,

Department of Interior, Washington, D.C.

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Instead of the University of Toronto having maintained an impartial attitude with respect to the struggle, from the very beginning it took a decided and very strong attitude as to the justice of our cause and as to our duty. At the opening of the session I addressed the students in Convocation Hall setting before them the immediate causes of the present war and I urged them to consider carefully what their duty was in respect to these issues, and to join the Officers' Training Corps which would prepare them for enlisting on active service when the call should come.

During the month of September, before the University opened, a group of the younger members of the staff undertook drill and were ready at the opening of the session to become officers of an Officers' Training Corps which was immediately established. The

students enthusiastically joined this corps and it was soon recruited far over strength, 1500 being inspected by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught in January, 1915.

For the varied activities of the University in connection with the early stage of the war I refer you to the copy of my report for the year ended June 30th, 1915, on pages 8, 9, and 10, which I have sent to you. Since that time students have been leaving in large numbers and we have now fully 2000 graduates and undergraduates on active service.

It is true that the University did not at the beginning establish a University Battalion, but we did not do so on the urgent advice of the military authorities at Ottawa and Toronto, it being thought that we could do better military service by distributing the majority of our young men as officers in other regiments throughout the Province. The result has been that we have staffed in greater or less degree a large number of regiments, but now we are instituting two distinct overseas companies bearing our own name in addition to all that we have done.

That any slur should be cast on the patriotism of the University of Toronto or its attitude on the present war is most unjust. We have had no change of policy from the beginning to the present, but unquestionably, as in other Universities, the feeling has been growing in volume and depth among the students as the meaning of the war has taken hold upon them.

I hope that you will be able to have this corrected in some way. I have nothing at all to say in criticism of other Canadian Universities or in comparison of Toronto with any other. We have all I believe endeavoured to do our duty in this awful crisis.

I shall be glad to receive copies of the publications of the United States Bureau of Education.

With kind personal regards, I am,

Yours sincerely,

President.

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April 11th, 1918

Miss A. Tolvan Smith,
Bureau of Education,

Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

Dear Miss Smith:

I am glad to have your letter of April 8th. I was afraid that possibly some correspondent from Toronto who had a prejudice against the University might have given you biased information, but I am glad to know that such is not the case. I am sure that you are stating our view rightly when you say that there was a desire on the part of the University to maintain its character as a centre of rational judgments and moral ideals in the midst of personal controversies having no direct bearing upon the national welfare, but I am afraid that the average reader would consider the word "neutral" in your report as meaning that we took a neutral attitude at the beginning as to the issues of the present war, which was very different from the actual case. I am glad to know that in your next report any erroneous impression such as might have been created in some minds by the statement will be removed for this is certainly the first occasion in which as far as I know the University has had any cause whatever to complain of any statement that has been made concerning it in the very full reports of the Board of Education which I know are of great use and fulfil an excellent function.

With regard to the question of military training in the University of Toronto even now in the time of war military drill is

quite voluntary, but as you will observe from my report it has been taken by large numbers of men students and we have encouraged by every means the student body to enter the Officers' Training Corps and prepare themselves for enlistment. My own opinion is that the military training that has been given to these students in the two years has been of great value to them, physically it tones them, they learn discipline and it produces a fine *esprit de corps* among these 1500 men. Not only have the undergraduates thrown themselves into it with eagerness but a very large number of the members of our staff have taken regular training and last week underwent examinations for proficiency. It is too soon for us to say yet what policy we shall follow permanently when the war is over.

Yours sincerely,

President.